DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 224 419 HE 015 741

AUTHOR Leong, Frederick T. L.; Sedlacek, William E.
TITLE A Survey of Incoming International Students. Research Report # 6-82.
INSTITUTION Maryland Univ., College Park. Counseling Center.
PUB DATE Jun 82
NOTE 25p.
AVAILABLE FROM Counseling Center, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Aspiration; Career Planning; College Choice; *College Students; Educational Background; Foreign Countries; *Foreign Students; Higher Education; Institutional Research; Occupational Aspiration; Political Attitudes; Questionnaires; Student Adjustment; Student Attitudes; *Student Characteristics; *Student College Relationship
IDENTIFIERS *University of Maryland College Park

ABSTRACT

The general background, views of the university, career and educational plans, academic skills, and personal development of incoming international students at the University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP), were surveyed. Students were also given the opportunity to indicate their social and political attitudes and their specific concerns about adjusting to the university. The UMCP international students were quite similar in terms of general characteristics to a national sample, as reported by the Institute for International Education (IIE) in its annual survey. The majority of both samples came from South and East Asia, followed by the Middle East. However, unlike the IIE sample, the UMCP sample consisted of both immigrant and nonimmigrant students. Sixty-one percent of the sample were males and 66 percent were undergraduates. Half of the respondents had been in the United States for less than a year. Forty-three of the incoming international students had graduated in the top 10 percent of their class, and 47 percent expected to earn a doctoral degree in their lifetime. For 67 percent of the students, UMCP was their first choice, while it was second choice for 22 percent. Fifty-seven percent of the respondents chose investigative occupations as part of their occupational goals, followed by social (17 percent) and enterprising (10 percent) occupations. In terms of adjusting to college, the international students were most concerned about meeting financial expenses and budgeting time, and least concerned about selecting a field of study and/or career, and getting to meet and know other students. Some of the questionnaire items are included. (SW)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED224419

COUNSELING CENTER

Office of Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

College Park, Maryland

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Univ of Md
Counseling Center

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

HE015741

COUNSELING CENTER
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
COLLEGE PARK, MARYLAND

A SURVEY OF INCOMING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Frederick T.L. Leong and William E. Sedlacek

Research Report # 6-82

We would like to acknowledge the assistance and cooperation of the Office of International Education Services, especially that of the Director, Valerie Woolston, in conducting this study.

COUNSELING CENTER
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
COLLEGE PARK, MARYLAND

A SURVEY OF INCOMING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Frederick T.L. Leong and William E. Sedlacek

Research Report # 6-82

SUMMARY

Incoming international students at the University of Maryland, College Park, (UMCP) responded to a questionnaire concerning their general background, views of the University, career and educational plans, academic skills and personal development. They were given the opportunity to indicate their social and political attitudes, and specific concerns about adjusting to the university.

The UMCP international students were quite similar in terms of general characteristics to a national sample, as reported by the Institute for International Education (IIE) in their annual survey. The majority of both samples came from South and East Asia, followed by the Middle East. However, unlike the IIE sample, the UMCP sample consisted of both immigrant and non-immigrant students. The majority of the UMCP sample were males (61%) and undergraduates (66%), with half of them having been in the United States for less than a year. In addition, 45% of the international students said that UMCP was the first school they had ever attended in the United States, while 31 percent had attended other schools.

Generally, the incoming international students had strong academic skills and academic backgrounds, with 43% of them having graduated in the top 10% of their class. They also had high educational aspirations, with 47% expecting to earn a doctoral degree in their lifetime. They had quite positive attitudes toward the University of Maryland. For 67% of the students, UMCP was their first choice of school, while 22% selected it as their second choice. The majority of students chose Investigative occupations (57%) as part of their occupational goals, followed by Social (17%) and Enterprising (10%) occupations. In terms of adjusting to college, the international students were most concerned about meeting financial expenses and budgeting time, and least concerned about selecting a field of study and/or career, and getting to meet and know other students.

Introduction

The Counseling Center has conducted two previous studies on international students at the University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP) in the late 1960's. The first study (Magoon and O'Donnell, 1967), was a descriptive report of the characteristics of foreign students enrolled at UMCP in 1965, while the second study (Chapman and Sedlacek, 1969) was a comparison of immigrant and non-immigrant foreign students. After reviewing these studies and other, more recent literature, on international students (e.g., Spaulding and Flack, 1976), it was decided that a survey of this population similar to the one conducted annually on U.S. incoming students would be quite useful, since it would provide information to the Counseling Center, the Office of International Education Services, and other campus offices which may have contact with international students.

After several meetings between the Office of International Education Services (IES) and the Counseling Center, a modified version of the University New Student Census (UNSC) was administered to all new international students in August, 1981. It should be noted that this survey is the first study in a program of research studies on international students being conducted by the Counseling Center.

Description of the Sample

The group of international students admitted to the University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP) during the fall of 1981 was quite similar to the national sample obtained by the Institute of International Education (IIE) in their annual census of foreign students in the United States (Open Doors: 1980/81; 1981) on some basic characteristics.

The majority of the 300 international students who completed the UMCP survey were male (61%), and undergraduates (66%), while 72% of the IIE sample was male and 59% were undergraduates. The similarity of the two samples was also evident in the geographic distribution of the foreign students (see Table 1).

However, there were some differences between the IIE sample and the UMCP sample which should be noted. Unlike the IIE census, the UMCP survey of international students was administered to both the immigrant and non-immigrant groups, since both groups were encouraged to attend the orientation program. The IIE defined foreign

students as "those who were enrolled in courses in the United States who are not citizens or immigrants (permanent residents)." (Open Doors: 1980/81; 1981, p. IX). and therefore collected data only from non-immigrant students. There may be significant differences between immigrant and non-immigrant foreign students as found in the earlier study by Chapman and Sedlacek (1969).

Half of the international students surveyed had been in the United States for less than a year. Forty five percent said UMCP was the first school they had ever attended in the United States, while 31% had attended one other school, 15% two other schools and 8% three other schools.

General Background of the Students

Generally the incoming international students had strong academic backgrounds. Forty-three percent of the group graduated from secondary schools in the top 10% of their classes, while 30% graduated in the top 25%. Three percent graduated in the lower half of their classes. In addition, 25% of the international students had an average "A" grade in secondary school, and 50% of the students from abroad had "B" averages. When interpreting these grades, it should be kept in mind that the schools attended by international students often use a different grading system from that used in the United States.

Significantly more fathers of the international students had earned college degrees (45%) than had their mothers (18%).

Twenty-three percent of the international students had never held a job, 16% had worked during the summer only, 25% had worked part time during the school year and the summer, and 4% had worked part time during the school year only. While attending school at UMCP, 29% did not plan to work, 16% were not permitted to work due to immigration regulations, and 29% planned to work (12% on campus, 17% off-campus). Seventeen percent indicated that they would be in special work programs, with half of them in federally funded work-study programs

and the other half working for academic credit as part of their departmental programs. Finally, 36% of the international students had mothers who worked outside the home while they were growing up, while 63% did not.

When asked where they would be living during the semester, 36% of the international students indicated that they would live alone in a house or apartment, 13% in a fraternity or sorority house, 6% in University residence halls, 9% would be sharing a house or apartment and 2% would room in a private home. Of those who were going to live off-campus, 28% would be less than three miles away, 32% would be from 3-10 miles away, 21% would be living 11-50 miles away, and 8% were not yet sure where they would be living.

View of UMCP

1. What is the main reason you decided to attend the University of Maryland?

1. Relatively inexpensive	5%
2. Good academic reputation	7%
3. Geographical location	35%
4. Quality of particular department	13%
5. Parents/family recommendation	18%
6. Not accepted elsewhere	10%
7. Most prestigious state school	0.4%
8. Advice of former students/friends	3%
9. Secondary school teacher/counselor's recommendation	7%
0. Other	0.7%

2. Of the colleges you applied to, the University of Maryland was:

1. Your first choice of school	67%
2. Your second choice of schools	22%
3. Your third choice of schools	3%
4. More than third choice, but not last choice	2%
5. Your last choice of schools	1%
6. Other	4%

3. Which of the following contributed most to your knowledge of the University of Maryland?

1. University publications (catalogs, bulletins, etc.)	40%
2. College Guides (Lovejoy's, Barron's, etc.)	6%
3. Visits to campus	18%
4. Word-of-mouth	16%
5. Publicity about athletic teams	0.7%
6. Publicity about research/academic achievements	7%
7. Overseas counseling center	5%
8. Schools in your country	3%
9. Other	5%

International students had quite positive attitudes toward the University of Maryland. For 67% of the students, UMCP was their first choice of school, while 22% selected it as their second choice. Besides geographical location (35%), the next most common reason for international students choosing to attend UMCP was the recommendation of their parents or family (18%). Also, as indicated in Table 3, Section A, most of the students agreed that the University of Maryland

one of the best universities in the country, and 73% disagreed that they would transfer from UMCP to another school.

Of the various options offered, the international students felt strongest that the major function of the University of Maryland is to develop personal and social skills of people, followed by providing a general learning facility, and preparing people for jobs (see Table 3, Section A).

Forty percent of the international students found out about UMCP from its publications such as catalogs and bulletins, while 18% got most information from a campus visit.

Career Plans

1. What is the main reason you decided to go to college?

1. Get a better job	11%
2. Gain a general education	18%
3. Learn more about things	21%
4. Learn job skills	7%
5. Make more money	2%
6. Meet new and interesting people	0.5%
7. Prepare for graduate school	17%
8. Develop myself generally	20%
9. Other	3%

2. Which of the following is most important in your initial career choice?

1. Job openings usually available	1%
2. High earnings/advancement potential	8%
3. Well respected, prestigious occupation	17%
4. Great deal of independence	12%
5. Work with ideas	7%
6. Work with people	13%
7. Work with things	12%
8. Intrinsic interest in the field	2%
9. Have not yet made a career choice	22%

Career Plans (continued)

3. List three occupations that are your vocational goals at the present time: (Coded according to Holland's 1973 model)

1. Realistic occupations	6%
2. Investigative occupations	57%
3. Artistic occupations	5%
4. Social occupations	17%
5. Enterprising occupations	10%
6. Conventional occupations	3%

4. Your father's and mother's occupation:

	Father's Occupation	Mother's Occupation
1. Realistic occupations	25%	3%
2. Investigative occupations	14%	4%
3. Artistic occupations	3%	1%
4. Social occupations	14%	75%
5. Enterprising occupations	36%	8%
6. Conventional occupations	6%	8%

Twenty percent of the international students indicated that their main reason for going to college was to develop themselves generally, 21% had come to learn more about things, 18% to gain a general education, 17% were using college to prepare for graduate school, 7% had come to college mainly to learn job skills, and 2% to make more money.

The most commonly cited factors considered important to their initial career choices were: having a well respected and prestigious occupation (17%), having a great deal of independence (12%) working with people (13%), and working with things (12%). It should be noted that only 1% chose careers based on job availability, and 22% of the international students had not yet made a career choice. The majority of the students (57%) chose Investigative careers , followed by Social (17%) and Enterprising occupations (10%), based on Holland's (1973) model. Finally, the international students felt that they could find a job easily in their chosen field upon graduation (see Table 3, Section B).

Educational Plans

1. How much education do you expect to get in your lifetime?

1. College, but less than a bachelor's degree	2%
2. B.A. or equivalent	11%
3. 1 or 2 years of graduate or professional school (Master's degree)	39%
4. Doctoral degree such as M.D. or Ph.D.	47%

2. Beside yourself, which of the following persons were most influential in your decision to attend the University of Maryland?

1. Parents	28%
2. Other family members (brother, sister, grandparents, etc.)	24%
3. University students/alumni	15%
4. Secondary school friends	1%
5. Secondary school teachers/staff	4%
6. Other friends/acquaintances	10%
7. Other	16%

3. Nationally, about 50% of university students typically leave before obtaining a degree. If this should happen to you, what would be the most likely reason?

1. Absolutely certain I will obtain a degree	50%
2. To accept a good job	8%
3. Unsatisfactory academic achievement	10%
4. It would cost more than my family or I could afford	15%
5. Limited background knowledge in subjects	5 %
6. Disinterest in studies	2%
7. Insufficient reading or other skills	0.3%
8. Other	8%

4. If you remain at the University and complete graduation requirements, which you think will be the most likely reason?

1. College graduates get better jobs	17%
2. A college degree is the only way I can enter the career of my choice	28%
3. Parents and relatives expect me to	2%
4. Opportunity to meet and know many different people	1%
5. College graduates earn more money	1%
6. To gain experience from extracurricular activities	4%
7. Interest in ideas and the pursuit of knowledge	25%
8. Must have a degree in order to enter graduate/professional school	17%
9. Other	3%

The international students had high educational aspirations, with 47% expecting to earn a doctoral degree and 39% a master's degree, while only 13% said they expected to receive a bachelor's degree or less.

Half (50%) of the international students felt "absolutely certain that I will obtain a degree," while 15% said that if they left the University before obtaining a degree, it would be because of the cost, 10% because of unsatisfactory academic achievement, and another 8% said to accept a good job.

When asked what would be the most likely reason for them to remain at the University and complete graduation requirements, almost half (45%) said that a college degree was the only way to enter either the career of their choice (28%) or to enter graduate or professional school (17%). Another 25% of the international students selected interest in ideas and the pursuit of knowledge, while 17% checked "college students get better jobs." Finally, the international students also felt quite certain about finishing a degree within their chosen academic field, and only a few of them had seriously considered not going to college (see Table 3, Section B). These high educational expectations may be partially explained by the fact that almost one-third (32%) of the students in the sample were graduate students.

Academic Skills

1. Which of the following most accurately describes your pattern of study?

1. Nearly all of my studying is done at the last minute to meet deadlines	2%
2. 70% at the last minute, 30% done systematically ahead of time	13%
3. 50% at the last minute, 50% systematically ahead of time	28%
4. 30% at the last minute, 70% systematically ahead of time	26%
5. Nearly all of my studying is done systematically ahead of time	26%
6. Other	3%

2. In terms of your usual study methods, which of the following best describes you?

1. Almost always behind in reading assignments	1%
2. Usually behind in reading assignments	8%
3. Sometimes behind in reading assignments	22%
4. Usually keep up with reading assignments	42%
5. Almost always keep up with reading assignments	22%
6. Other	3%

The international students reported a systematic approach to their pattern of study, with 26% of them indicating that nearly all their studying was done systematically, ahead of time, another 26% said that about 70% of their studying was done systematically ahead of time, and 28% of the sample reported that half of their studying was done systematically ahead of time and half at the last minute. International students also indicated that they usually kept up with their reading assignments (42%), or almost always kept up with the reading assignments (22%). Another 22% said they were sometimes behind in their reading assignments, but only 9% reported being either "usually behind (8%)," or "almost always behind (1%)." Therefore the foreign students were least concerned about improving their English reading skills (mean = 2.26), and most concerned about their writing ability (mean = 1.95), with spelling (mean = 2.09) and speaking skills (mean = 2.16) following close behind (see Table 3, Section C).

Social and Political Attitudes

1. Which of the following issues do you feel is most important for society to resolve?

1. Racism	18%
2. Integrity of those with power	14%
3. Sexism	2%
4. Ecology/pollution	7%
5. The energy crisis	7%
6. Drug abuse	12%
7. The economy/inflation	28%
8. Other	11%

2. If you witnessed an act of cheating, which would you most likely do?

1. Likely ignore the incident	39%
2. Inform the exam proctor	5%
3. Inform the instructor	6%
4. Inform the instructor anonymously	2%
5. Inform the department head	2%
6. Discuss with your advisor	12%
7. Speak to the individual(s) involved in the incident	26%
8. Other	8%

3. What do you think is most important in playing a game?

1. To play as well as you are able	47%
2. To beat your opponent	6%
3. To play the game fairly	12%
4. To have fun, win or lose	35%

Twenty-eight percent of the foreign students felt that the economy and inflation were the most important issue for society to resolve, 18% thought it was racism, 14% said the integrity of those with power, 12% chose drug abuse, and 7% each selected ecology/pollution or the energy crisis.

When asked what they would most likely do if they witnessed an act of cheating, 39% of the international students said they would report the incident, 26% said they would speak to the individuals involved, and 12% said they would discuss the incident with their advisor.

Personal Development

1. Which of the following contributed most to your own development during the past year?

1. Course work	20%
2. Work with political/social action group	2%
3. Work with a group not involved in political/social action	4%
4. Independent or individual study or research	26%
5. Friendships made	11%
6. Social Life (dating, parties, etc.)	5%
7. Job experience	24%
8. Contact with teachers/counselors	6%
9. Other	2%

2. How would you describe the type of reading material you have read in the last year? (That is, leisure, not required reading)

1. Did little or no outside reading last year	7%
2. Technical, "how to do it," materials	11%
3. Science (math, physics, etc.)	23%
4. Adventure, mystery, western, fiction	16%
5. Social Science (history, economics, social problems)	20%
6. Sports, recreation	3%
7. Science fiction	2%
8. Poetry, plays, essays	9%
9. Other	6%

3. When have you particpated in an organized athletic team?

1. Never	34%
2. Before secondary school only	12%
3. In secondary school only	20%
4. In secondary school and before secondary school	34%

International students felt that academic activities such as course work (20%) and independent study or research (26%), and job experience (24%) were important to their personal development during the previous year.

With respect to leisure time reading, foreign students were most likely to read science (23%), social science (history, economics, social problems) (20%) adventure, mystery, etc., (16%), and technical (how to do it) materials (11%), while 9% said poetry, plays and essays. Finally, 34% of the international students had particpated in organized athletic teams in secondary school and before secondary school, 20% had participated in secondary school only, 12% said they had participated before secondary school only, and 34% said they had never participated in an organized athletic team.

Students' Concerns

1. Of the alternatives below, which do you expect will be the easiest part of adjusting to college?

1. Deciding whether or how much to get involved in campus activities	13%
2. Becoming a more critical and independent thinker	16%
3. Earning satisfactory grades	15%
4. Getting to meet and know other students - both sexes	17%
5. Meeting financial expenses	2%
6. Budgeting time	1%
7. Studying efficiently	14%
8. Selecting a field of study and/or career	19%
9. Other	0%

2. Of the alternative below, which do you expect will be the hardest part of adjusting to college?

1. Deciding whether or how much to get involved in campus activities	13%
2. Becoming a more critical and independent thinker	9%
3. Earning satisfactory grades	13%
4. Getting to meet and know other students - both sexes	6%
5. Meeting financial expenses	24%
6. Budgeting time	14%
7. Studying efficiently	10%
8. Selecting a field of study and/or career	8%
9. Other	2%

The international students felt that the hardest part of adjusting to college for them would be meeting financial expenses (24%), budgeting time (14%), deciding whether or how much go get involved in campus activities and earning satisfactory grades (13% each), and studying efficiently (10%).

They considered the following to be the easiest part of adjusting to college: selecting a field of study and/or career (19%), getting to know and meet other students (both sexes) (17%), becoming a more critical and independent thinker (16%), earning satisfactory grades (15%), and studying efficiently (14%).

Results from the attitudinal items (see Table 3, section F) generally support the previous adjustment questions, with the international students less concerned about adjusting to the social life in college (mean = 3.05), more concerned about financing their education (mean= 2.39), and agreeing that they are sometimes anxious about succeeding in college (mean = 2.51). This high level of anxiety about succeeding in college is surprising, given the earlier finding that many foreign students are certain about completing their degree (50%). Although the international students seem less concerned about completing college, it should not be assumed that they do not have adjustment problems. For example, the international students are likely to want to learn to cope effectively with stress (mean = 2.21) and interested in seeking counseling regarding emotional/social concerns (mean = 2.93), and educational/ vocational concerns (mean = 2.13).

References

Chapman, T.H. and Sedlacek, W.E. A comparison of immigrant and non-immigrant foreign students at the University of Maryland. Counseling Center Research Research Report # 6-69. College Park, Md.: University of Maryland, 1969.

Holland, J.L. Making vocational choices: A theory of careers. Englewood, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1973.

Magoon, T.M. and O'Donnell, M. Characteristics of foreign students enrolled the University of Maryland, College Park. Counseling Center Research Report # 4-67. University of Maryland, College Park, 1967.

Open Doors, 1980-81. New York: Institute of International Education, 1981.

Spaulding, S. and Flack, M.J. The world's students in the United States. New York: Harper, 1976.

Table 1

Geographic Distribution of International Students

Geographic Region	UMCP Sample	IIE Sample
South and East Asia	42%	30%
Middle East	25%	27%
Europe	10%	8%
Latin America	9%	16%
Africa	8%	12%
North America	6%	6%
Pacific	1%	1%

Table 2

International Students' Attitudes Toward Women's Roles (Means)

1. Women earning as much as their dates should bear the expenses equally when they go out together	2.56
2. There are some professions that are more suitable for men than women	2.58
3. Women should worry less about their rights and more about becoming good wives and mothers	3.28

Note: 1 = strongly agree; 5 = strongly disagree

Table 3

International Student Means and Standard Deviations on Attitude Items

Item	Mean	S.D.
A. View of UMCP		
1. The major function of the University of Maryland is to provide a general learning facility.	2.28	.80
2. The major function of the University of Maryland is to prepare people for jobs.	2.93	1.00
3. The major function of the University of Maryland is to develop personal and social skills of people.	2.26	.83
4. I expect to transfer from the University of Maryland and earn my degree from another school.	3.67	.97
5. The University of Maryland is one of the best universities in the country.	2.54	.85
- - - - - -		
B. Career and Educational Plans		
1. I expect to find a job easily in my chosen field when I graduate.	1.98	.89
2. I thought seriously about not going to college.	4.09	1.09
3. I will likely end up majoring in a different academic field from the one that now seems appropriate to me.	3.58	.93
- - - - -		
C. Academic Skills		
1. I would like to improve my English spelling skills.	2.09	1.12
2. I need to improve my English speaking skills.	2.16	1.16
3. I would like to improve my English writing ability.	1.95	.92
4. I need to improve my English reading skills.	2.26	1.07
5. I would like to improve my ability to speak before a group.	2.02	.80

Table 3 (continued)

International Student Means and Standard Deviations on Attitude Items

Item	Mean	S.D.
D. Social and Political Attitudes		
1. I support gun control legislation.	2.25	1.15
2. I support the use of nuclear power as an energy source.	2.58	1.10
3. Living together before marriage is all right.	3.14	1.19
4. Women should worry less about their rights and more about becoming good wives and mothers.	3.28	1.18
5. There are some professions that are more suitable for men than women.	2.18	1.18
6. Women earning as much as their dates should bear the expenses equally when they go out together.	2.56	.92
- - - - -		
E. Personal Development		
1. I want to join some campus clubs or groups.	2.38	.87
2. I would like to be more physically active.	2.19	.86
3. I expect to participate in some form of intramural sports at the University.	2.63	.99
4. I expect to be involved in religious activities at the University.	3.56	.99
5. I generally keep up to date with political affairs.	2.71	.92
- - - - -		

Table 3 (continued)

International Student Means and Standard Deviations on Attitude Items

Item	Mean	S.D.
F. Students' Concerns		
1. I sometimes feel anxious about succeeding in college.	2.51	1.12
2. I expect to have a hard time adjusting to the academic work of college.	2.97	1.02
3. I expect to have a hard time adjusting to the social life of college.	3.05	.97
4. I am concerned about my ability to finance my education.	2.39	1.02
5. I would like to be more assertive.	2.48	.73
6. I would like to learn to cope more effectively with stress.	2.21	.81
7. I am interested in seeking counseling regarding educational/vocational plans.	2.13	.81
8. I am interested in seeking counseling regarding emotional/social concerns.	2.93	.98

Note: 1 = strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree